

Senate Health and Human Services Committee Hearing

DePelchin Children's Center Testimony For Adoption Interim Charge

Presented By:

Renee Calder Price, BS, LCPAA
Director, Child Welfare Services

Wednesday, April 20, 2016



DePelchin Children's Center: Who We Are

DePelchin Children's Center is one of the largest providers of prevention, foster care and adoption services that integrate mental health in Texas.

Our Mission: We strengthen the lives of children by enhancing their mental health and physical well-being.



DePelchin At a Glance

124 year-old
organization

Main
campus
located in
Houston, TX

Satellite
locations
throughout
Greater
Houston

Satellite
locations in
Austin, San
Antonio,
Lubbock, &
Brownwood

Approximately
300 part-time
and full-time
employees



DePelchin™
CHILDREN'S CENTER

MENTAL HEALTH | FOSTER CARE | ADOPTION

Prevention Services

- Parent education
- At-risk youth programs
- Community and School-Based Counseling
- Supported Independent Living Program



Foster Care & Residential Treatment Services

- Traditional therapeutic foster care
- Kinship/relative foster care
- Specialized training and support
- Residential Treatment Center

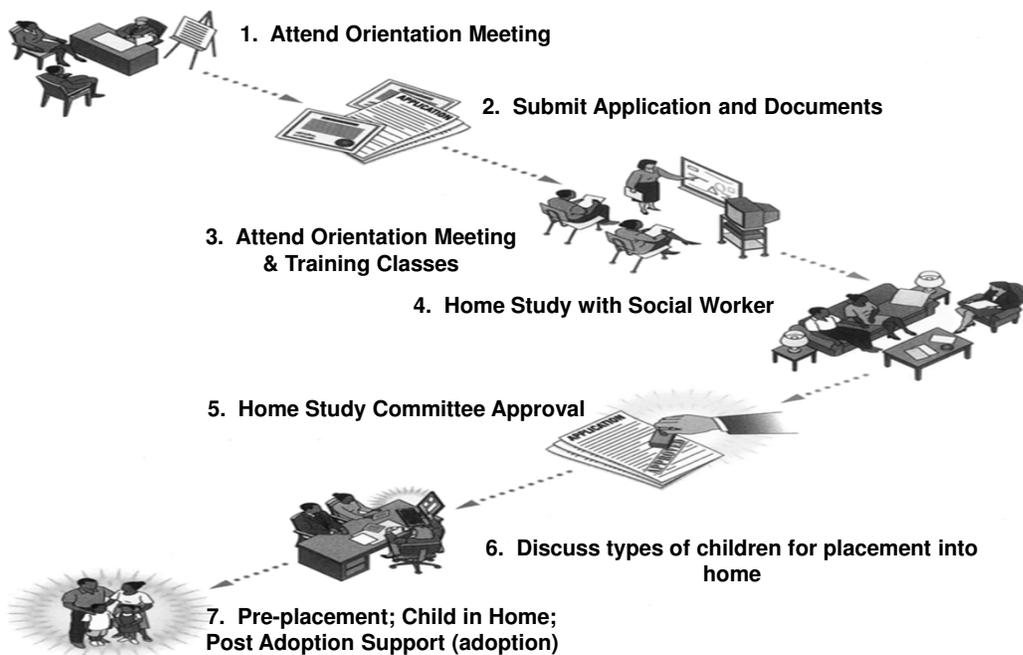


Adoption Services

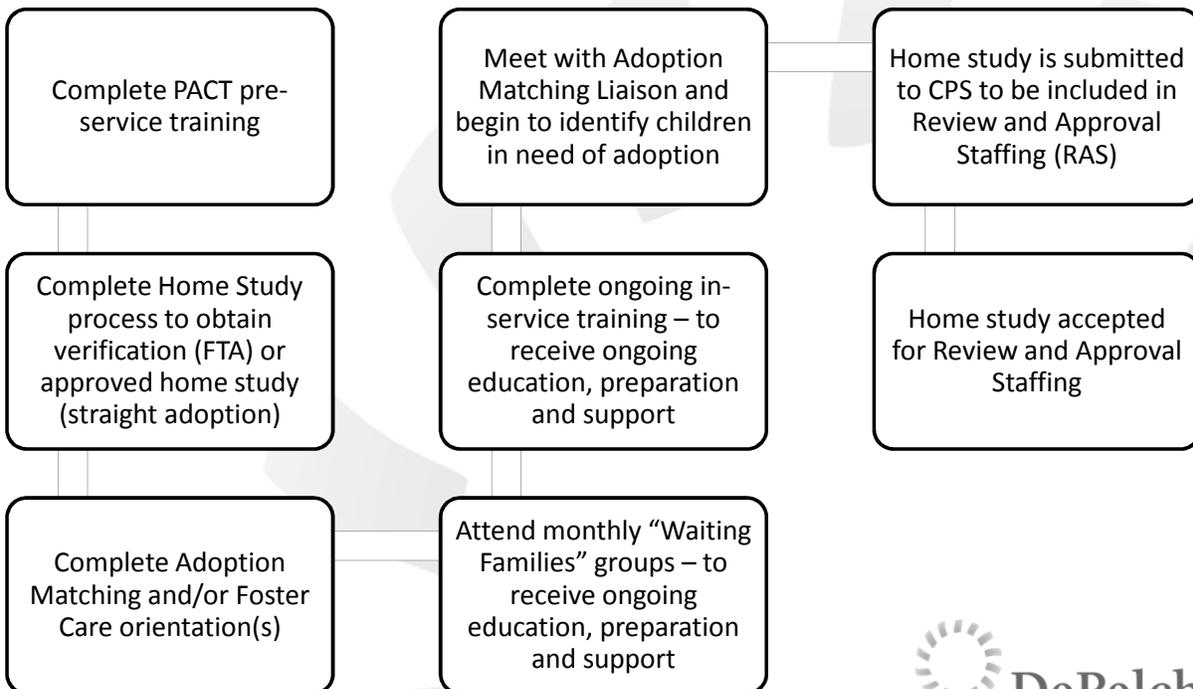
- CPS Adoption services
- Private infant adoption program
- Post-adoption support programs



Pathway to Parenting: Overview of Matching Process



DePelchin Match/Selection Process



DePelchin Match/Selection Process - continued

Matching Liaison attends RAS on family's behalf to present family to RAS team and advocate for family's selection

If family is selected, family reviews the child's de-identified case record

If family wishes to proceed, a Child Presentation staffing is scheduled and attended by all parties – to allow opportunity for selected family to ask questions of the team and vice versa

Adoptive placement occurs when all parties, including verbal children, agree – taking into consideration the child's needs, i.e. educational (school schedule), health (physical and behavioral, including doctor appointments), social, etc.

If family and team decide to proceed, pre-placement visit schedule is set by all participating parties – using guidelines set forth in the Pre-Placement/Adoption Transition Protocol



MENTAL HEALTH | FOSTER CARE | ADOPTION

Recommendations to reduce adoption disruptions and dissolutions and better support adoptive families

Provide trauma-informed comprehensive preparation and ongoing training/support to adoptive families



Comprehensive child/family profile assessment, including transparency in information sharing



Ensure that children are prepared for adoption and that they participate in an individualized pre-placement visitation process



Increase funding for post-placement and post adoption services to better support adoptive families



Ensure caseload sizes are reasonable for case management staff to successfully meet best practice standards and program requirements

Provide trauma-informed comprehensive preparation and ongoing training/support to adoptive families

Many of the families who embark on the journey to adopt children from the foster care system do not have a full understanding of the impact that the trauma experienced by these children has on their emotional development. Therefore, it's critical to provide them with trauma-informed training that prepares them to help a child heal by having a thorough understanding of the child's past, current functioning, and the challenges that lie ahead.

Comprehensive child/family profile assessment, including transparency in information sharing

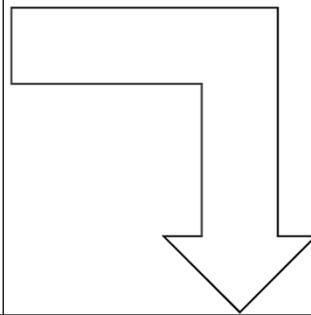
All too often, adoptive parents report not having received all of the historical information about a child they adopted. We make every effort to share with the family all information made available to us. However, if there was information not made available to us by the CPS caseworker, we are unable to share this information with the family.

Ensure that children are prepared for adoption and that they participate in an individualized pre-placement visitation process

Children/youth should be empowered to have voice and choice in choosing their family. These visits should be designed and implemented in a way that promotes a gradual, healthy transition between the child's current foster family and the prospective adoptive family. They should follow guidelines provided through research for age-appropriate timelines for transitioning children. Make certain all adults are communicating consistent messages to the child during the transitional period and that the child has proper closure when leaving their foster family

Increase funding for post-placement and post adoption services to better support adoptive families

Funding is needed to provide the services to families to stabilize and support them. These services help smooth the transition and increase the chances for long-term success and positive outcomes for families. The overall body of adoption research has associated receiving post-adoption services with more positive outcomes and has linked unmet service needs with poorer outcomes.



Funding is also needed to increase therapeutic and other support services to clients, especially since more families are requesting out-of-home (residential) treatment for their children who are exhibiting the effects of complex trauma that resulted from their abuse and, sometimes, complex placement history while in foster care. This level of care is expensive and has a substantial impact on post adoption provider funding, often leading to children having to return to the State's custody solely for the purpose of funding their treatment.

Ensure caseload sizes are reasonable for case management staff to successfully meet best practice standards and program requirements

Studies on child welfare adoptive families indicate that the amount and quality of support received contribute to permanency and positive adjustment and service provision early in the placement and being able to receive services for as long as they are needed, rather than for a time-limited period, are linked to more positive outcomes. In order to effectively provide these services, agencies must employ quality staff who are trauma informed and adoption competent to support and preserve adoptive families.

Senate Health and Human Services Committee Hearing

Thank you for your time and consideration

For more information please contact:

Jenifer Jarriel, President, CEO

DePelchin Children's Center

713-802-7638

Jenifer@depelchin.org

